

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 1-AWASHINGTON TIMES
12 March 1987

New U.N. service cited as a Soviet propaganda tool

By Bill Gertz
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar has established a new information-gathering service that critics say will help the Soviet Union exploit the anti-American bias of the world body.

"This represents a consolidation of Soviet control over the political information and policy functions inside the U.N.," said Thomas Dewey, a policy analyst who monitors U.N. activities for The Heritage Foundation.

"It means that his [Mr. Perez de Cuellar's] perspective on international events will be further skewed toward the Soviet perception of world events and issues."

Mr. Perez de Cuellar, in a March 1 staff memorandum to the U.N. Secretariat, the executive arm of the United Nations in New York, stated

that a new Office for Research and the Collection of Information will provide "political news and information" to the Secretariat.

U.N. spokesman Joe Sills rejected charges that the office will provide information with a pro-Soviet bias.

He said it will help the secretary-general perform his duties, such as mediating international disputes.

Asked if the new office could be characterized as an intelligence service, Mr. Sills replied: "If gathering information is considered intelligence, the answer is yes. But if by intelligence you mean surreptitiously gathering information — we don't do that. All the information will come from U.N. information centers and public sources."

That aspect most concerns U.S. officials since, they say, the Soviet Union has sought to control U.N. information policy and centers around the world through some of its 411 Secretariat staff members.

Vladimir Ustinov, a former Soviet press attache, recently replaced Anatoly Mkrtychyan as director of the Department of Public Information's external relations division, the section which directs U.N. information centers, Mr. Sills said.

Arkady Shevchenko, a high-ranking Soviet defector and former U.N. undersecretary-general, has identified Mr. Mkrtychyan as a KGB

colonel. U.S. security officials fear Mr. Ustinov also may work for the KGB.

Mr. Shevchenko described the DPI as "mobilized" for Soviet propaganda and disinformation activities through the United Nations, a charge supported by a congressional study conducted last year. The study on select media topics found that nearly half of all DPI media programs were biased against U.S. positions and originated with Soviet bloc and Third World U.N. officials.

Other Secretariat officials have been identified as KGB agents. A Senate Intelligence Committee report released last year found that a top Secretariat aide to Mr. Perez de Cuellar, identified by intelligence sources as Vladimir Kolesnikov, is a "KGB China expert." U.N. officials denied the charge.

Gennady Zakharov, another Soviet Secretariat employee, was arrested and charged with spying for the KGB last fall but was later traded for U.S. correspondent Nicholas Daniloff. The incident triggered the expulsion of 25 Soviet U.N. diplomats identified as top Soviet intelligence officers in New York, a major international base for Soviet intelligence operations.

No U.S. representatives have been appointed to Mr. Perez de Cuellar's executive staff and, unlike the Soviets, few Americans hold high-ranking Secretariat posts.

Political information on issues of "peace and security" will be produced by the new information office from U.N. centers, the secretary-general's memorandum states.

The new office also will provide reports that "assess global trends," provide "early warning" of world events and formulate country "profiles."

Those terms, commonly used to describe intelligence activities, have alarmed U.S. officials, who see the new office as a potential base for Soviet intelligence and propaganda activities.

"We're concerned about the character of the new office," one State Department official said. "From the description — a research and political news and information service — we see it an extension of what was basically a Soviet project."

The official described the new Secretariat office as a "U.N. CIA"

that will receive information from field offices under the direction of the DPI.

"All this suggests that the U.N. network that collects and processes information and is controlled by the Soviets will provide information slanted to the Soviet view," the official said.

Mr. Sills said another Secretariat operation, the Political Information News Service, has been under the direction of Vasily Safronchuk, a Soviet national who directs the Secretariat's political and security council affairs department. PINS will become part of the new information service and its personnel also will join the staff, he said.

According to U.S. sources, the transfer of PINS from Mr. Safronchuk's control initially was opposed by the Soviet Union. However, when Soviet U.N. officials learned that their control over the news service would continue, they supported the reorganization, the sources said.

Another U.S. official said the U.N. Secretariat ostensibly set up the office to cut costs. But the official charged that "manipulation and illegal penetration" of the U.N. Secretariat staff by Soviet government of-

ficials led to its formation.

CIA sources said more than 100 Soviet nationals, disguised as international civil servants employed by the U.N. Secretariat, serve as KGB intelligence agents. The Soviets use their Secretariat employees, who according to the U.N. Charter must not be linked to any government, to collect intelligence, recruit agents and conduct worldwide spy operations, the sources said.

"The Soviets don't just work by spying at the United Nations," the official said. "They know that the Secretariat is very useful for creating impressions in the United Nations that most countries in the world take positions favorable toward the Soviet, or socialist, point of view, and are opposed to the United States."

U.N. sources said the leading candidate to direct the new office is James Jonah, a Sierra Leone national. One source said no other personnel assignments have been made.

Establishment of the new office comes as the United Nations is beset with severe financial problems resulting from a curtailment of U.S. funds.

Last year, the State Department was forced by Congress to reduce drastically the U.S. annual dues. Amounting to \$210.3 million, the U.S. dues accounted for one-quarter of the U.N. operating budget. Only about \$100 million was paid as a result of budget cuts.